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**NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**LEADER OF FRESNO-BASED COCAINE DRUG RING ENTERS GUILTY PLEA**

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that RAMIRO BARRAGAN, 49, of Fresno, the leader of a major cocaine distribution operation based in Fresno has entered guilty pleas to conspiring to distribute cocaine, conspiring to commit bank fraud and money laundering, and being a previously deported alien of Mexico.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the Major Narcotics Unit of the Fresno Police Department.

According to court documents, the charges against BARRAGAN originally stemmed from a 15-month OCDETF investigation of RAMIRO BARRAGAN, a previously convicted drug trafficker, and his cocaine trafficking organization. OCDETF is an acronym for the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force program, which was established in 1982 to combine and leverage federal law enforcement assets into a comprehensive attack against significant drug trafficking organizations. Court documents further reveal that, during the investigation, drug agents received evidence that BARRAGAN was responsible for distributing at least 100 kilograms, or 220 pounds of cocaine, per month throughout Fresno and in the state of Oregon. The investigation, which included the use of federally authorized wiretaps, culminated in four separate indictments charging nineteen co-conspirators, including RAMIRO BARRAGAN, with offenses ranging from cocaine distribution to bank fraud. Drug and IRS agents seized approximately 11 kilograms, or 24 pounds, of cocaine and nearly \$1 million in cash and assets, consisting of RAMIRO BARRAGAN's residence on East Carmen Avenue in Fresno, five luxury vehicles, and over \$240,000 in cash representing drug proceeds.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Karen Escobar, who prosecuted the case, in his plea agreement, BARRAGAN admitted to his leadership role and agreed to assist in the forfeiture of his East Carmen residence, where \$95,480 in cash, derived from drug trafficking, was seized from a clothes hamper after BARRAGAN's arrest during a search of the residence. He also agreed to a sentence of not less than 12 and one half years. He is facing a maximum potential penalty of life in prison.

At BARRAGAN's plea hearing, his two nephews, EDGAR AVENDANO and EDGAR BARRAGAN, also entered guilty pleas to felony drug offenses. These guilty pleas come on the

heels of guilty pleas by eight other members of RAMIRO BARRAGAN's drug trafficking organization.

RAMIRO BARRAGAN and his nephews are scheduled to be sentenced on November 13, 2006 before United States District Judge Anthony Ishii.

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Editor's Note: A list of the defendants, charges, and dispositions is attached.

**Indictment I**

<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Charges</u>
Ramiro Barragan	49	Fresno	GUILTY	Drug Conspiracy; Being a Deported Alien Found in the United States
Ignacio Calderon	54	Fresno	Pending	
Zebedee White	36	Fresno	GUILTY	Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine
Jason Lee	33	Reno	GUILTY	Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine
Edgar Barragan	21	Fresno	GUILTY	Conspiracy to Distribute and to Possess with Intent to Distribute Crack Cocaine; Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering and Bank Fraud
Humberto Llerena, aka "El Cuba"	50	Sacramento	GUILTY	Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine
Maria Alejandrina Orci-Romero	40	Sacramento	GUILTY	Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine
Francisco Torres, aka "El Topo"	28	Fresno	GUILTY	Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine
Jorge Islas	38	Fresno	GUILTY	Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine

Seila Melgoza	26	Fresno	GUILTY	Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine
Elizabeth Guerrero	29	Fresno	FUGITIVE	Conspiracy to Distribute and to Possess with Intent to Distribute Cocaine; Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine

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### **Indictment II**

<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Charges</u>
Edgar Barragan	21	Fresno	GUILTY	Conspiracy to Distribute and to Possess with the Intent to Distribute Crack Cocaine
Edgar Avendano	28	Fresno	GUILTY	Unlawful Use of a Communication Facility to Facilitate a Drug Trafficking Offense
Jesus Oscar Herrera	25	Fresno	GUILTY	Conspiracy to Distribute and to Possess with the Intent to Distribute Crack Cocaine

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### **Indictment III**

<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Charges</u>
Enaida Carolina Haro	28	Fresno	FUGITIVE	Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering and Bank Fraud; Bank Fraud

Ramiro Barragan	48	Fresno	GUILTY	Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering and Bank Fraud
Santos Rafael Islas Ramirez aka Rafael Ramirez Santos	39	Tijuana, Mexico	Pending	Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering and Bank Fraud; Bank Fraud
Edgar Barragan	21	Fresno	GUILTY	Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering and Bank Fraud
Maria Monsivais	35	Fresno	Pending	Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering and Bank Fraud; Bank Fraud

#### **Indictment IV**

<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Charges</u>
Yolanda Campos	29	Fresno	Pending	Conspiracy to Commit Bank Fraud and Money Laundering; Money Laundering; False Statements
Marisa Rodriguez	29	Fresno	Pending	Conspiracy to Commit Bank Fraud and Money Laundering; Bank Fraud; False Statements

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